



The wise men were seeking God. Through some kind of prophetic revelation which remains an enigma, God had revealed to them that there would be a sign given in the heavens that would lead them to God's great manifestation. The sign was a star. The Scriptures tell us "they were overjoyed at seeing the star." We can only imagine the joy and excitement that must have overwhelmed the wise men: God was speaking to them! God wanted to reveal Himself to them! They set out immediately knowing they had a

long journey ahead, yet any required sacrifice would be well worth it, after all, they were hoping to come face to face with God!! Finally, they found the place where God had directed them. And the Scriptures say, "On entering the house they found the child with Mary his mother." At this point no words were necessary. They were in the presence of perfect Love; they were in the presence of God! With great reverence they bowed low and humbly offered their gifts: frankincense, gold, and myrrh.

Two thousand years later every Christian heart wells with emotion at the thought of being in the same room with Mary and the baby Jesus. What a privilege it would be to look into the face of the Immaculate Virgin Mary and behold her love for Jesus. What a breathtaking, humbling experience it would be to look into the infant face of God! This Christmas season, God our Father, invites all His children to come to the Child Jesus and learn from Him. Of course, we cannot see Mary, Jesus, and the magi with our physical eyes, yet we can enter this privileged house with the eyes of faith. Today, as in every generation since that first Christmas, God faithfully inspires His children to put away other things and make the journey to the holy place—you might say He is putting a star in the heavens of our souls which will lead us to Christ. These inspirations, or stars, come in the form of a gentle reminder to pray, or to be patient, or to make a sacrifice and go the extra mile; or perhaps God is calling us to make time for Him, to enter into silent communion with Him, to open our hearts and seek His face, to meditate and form our minds after the mind of Christ. Like the magi, we all have a journey to make and gifts to bring. We may not have any frankincense, but we have what it symbolizes: prayer. What a beautiful gift to give to the Child Jesus! We may not have gold, but we can give our love and our time which is more precious than Gold! We may not have myrrh, but we do have what this bitter herb symbolizes: we can graciously accept and even embrace the trials and sufferings that come our way in this life in imitation of Jesus who bore the sufferings of the world for our salvation. May God help us to follow the star that leads to Jesus. When we hear that still small inspirational voice of God, may we, like the wise men, be "overjoyed at seeing the star," and realize that any required sacrifice to follow the star is well worth it; after all, we are being led to the breathtaking, humbling experience of looking into the infant face of God!

Have a Merry Christmas Season, a joyful Epiphany, and a happy new year!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples

Jubilee Year 3 **“Behold, I make all things new.”** ~ Rev 24:5
Renewing and strengthening our faith for the future.



Archbishop Carroll

Catholicism in 18th Century Virginia

British colonization of America began under Queen Elizabeth I. In 1587, Walter Raleigh named Virginia in honor of the Virgin Queen who notoriously persecuted Catholics. The Church of England (Anglican Church) was formally established in the Virginia colony by the 17th century. Puritans and Catholics seeking religious freedom in the colonies were largely unsuccessful in Virginia in being able to worship freely.

In 1688, King William III enacted the Religious Tolerance Act which allowed for Protestants to worship freely if they pledged allegiance to the Crown. But tolerance was not afforded to Catholics who were not permitted to worship freely. Catholics were fined for offenses such as attempting to run for public office or even to vote. Priests were expelled from Virginia. Jesuit priests from Maryland secretly crossed the Potomac River in the cover of night to celebrate Mass for Catholic Virginians.

Catholics in Virginia would not experience religious freedom until the American colonies won their independence in the Revolution against England in 1776. Virginia had been a colony loyal to King George III. To ensure that Virginia was truly free from the laws that bound the newly independent state to the British regime, new laws were necessary. The first act was to repeal taxation used to support the Anglican Church.

George Mason drafted the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776 that ensured religious tolerance. Patrick Henry had tried to pass a bill that would have established Christianity as the official religion of Virginia where the people could pay taxes to a Christian fund of their choice. The bill was rejected in favor of Thomas Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom which called for a complete separation of church and state. Finally, the Anglican Church was no longer tied to government so that Catholics could freely practice the faith.

In 1783, John Carroll, a Jesuit priest from Maryland, spearheaded the organization of the Catholic Church in America. He immediately established Georgetown University for Catholic education. In 1784, Pope Pius VI instituted Baltimore as the first Catholic diocese and the Most Rev. John Carroll the first bishop in the new nation.

In 1790, Archbishop Carroll sent his blessing to newly elected President George Washington. Washington donated money to help build the first Catholic church in Virginia and in 1795, the Church of St. Mary was erected in Alexandria. In 1809, Archbishop Carroll invited future saint Elizabeth Ann Seton to open a school for girls in Emmitsburg, Maryland. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is one of the patrons of the Diocese of Arlington.

Year 3 we focus on sharing our Catholic Faith with others in word and deed through evangelization and mercy. For more on preparation, visit: www.arlingtondiocese.org/goldenjubiliecelebration/

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